



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1400 South 19th Avenue
Bozeman, MT 59718

June 10, 2016

To: Governor's Office, Sheena Wilson, State Capitol, Room 204, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, State Capitol, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, P.O. Box 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Director's Office
Commissioners

Parks Division

Lands Section

FWP

Fisheries Division

Legal Unit

Wildlife Division

Design & Construction

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103

MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620

Bureau of Reclamation, 7700 Canyon Ferry Rd., Helena, MT 59602

James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624

Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624

George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624

Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771

Montana Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624

Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923

Jack Jones, 3014 Irene St., Butte, MT 59701

Mark Natale, 46 Broadwater Rd., Townsend, MT 59644

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed decision notice is for the proposed herbicidal control of the aquatic invasive curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) within the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (CFWMA). The initial control action will occur in June 2016. The object of the action is to reduce the levels of curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) within the west and east canals on the CFWMA at least in the immediate future. If CLP spreads and becomes a problem elsewhere on the CFWMA (duck ponds for example), then there might be a need to control CLP elsewhere on the CFWMA in the future. It is unlikely that control efforts will totally eradicate CLP from Canyon Ferry WMA as upstream populations will continue to provide plant propagules, but reductions in overall abundance will benefit water flow in the canals and native aquatic plant populations.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess significant potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on April 27, 2016.

Public comments on the proposed project were taken for 30 days through May 27, 2016. An EA notice was mailed to 39 individuals and groups; legal notices were printed in the Bozeman Chronicle and Helena

Independent Record. The Environmental Assessment was also posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>. No comments were received on the Environmental Assessment. Based on the Environmental Assessment, the lack of public comments received, and benefits and risks associated with this project, it is my decision to go forward with the proposed action (Alternative 3) of doing aquatic herbicidal control for the control of CLP. I find there to be no significant impacts on the human and physical environments associated with this project. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Questions regarding this Decision Notice should be mailed to:

Adam Grove
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 998
Townsend, MT 59644
Or e-mailed to: adgrove@mt.gov

Sincerely,



Sam B. Sheppard
Region Three Supervisor

Attachment



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE for the Control of the Aquatic Invasive Curly-leaf Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) within the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, Broadwater County,

**Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 3, Bozeman
June 2016**

Preface

The enclosed Decision Notice has been prepared for the control of the aquatic invasive curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) within the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area. Canyon Ferry WMA is administered by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) but is managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) through a management agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation. The purpose of the proposed action is to control curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) within the west and east canals on the CFWMA at least in the immediate future. If CLP spreads and becomes a problem elsewhere on the CFWMA (duck ponds for example), then there might be a need to control CLP elsewhere on the CFWMA in the future. The west canal supplies the water to Pond 4, and the east canal supplies the water to Ponds 2 and 3. The initial control action would occur in June 2016.

The objective for the proposed action is to reduce the amount of CLP in the two canals. CLP impedes water flow down the canals which restricts the ability of MFWP to manage duck pond water levels to desired levels during those times of the year that CLP is actively growing in the canals. CLP may also limit the growth of desired native aquatic plants in the canals. It is unlikely that control efforts would totally eradicate CLP from Canyon Ferry WMA as upstream populations would continue to provide plant propagules, but reductions in overall abundance will benefit water flow in the canals and native aquatic plant populations.

Public Process and Comments

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. An Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with MEPA was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public comment on April 27, 2016.

The following three alternatives were considered in this Environmental Assessment:

Alternative 1: No Action. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no control of CLP within the two canals on the CFWMA.

Alternative 2: Non-herbicidal control methods. Under this alternative, MFWP would attempt to utilize other methods to control CLP levels in the canals. These methods are not believed to be as effective as herbicidal control and are in some cases generally not feasible.

Alternative 3: Preferred alternative to utilize aquatic herbicidal control. Under this alternative, MFWP would conduct aquatic herbicidal applications in the two canals on the Canyon Ferry WMA as needed in an effort to control CLP.

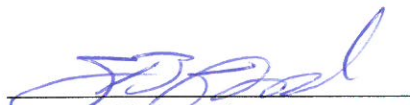
Public comments were taken on the EA for 30 days (through May 27, 2016). Legal notices were printed in the Bozeman Chronicle and Helena Independent Record. The Environmental Assessment was also posted on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>.

No public comments were received on the proposed project.


Decision

It is my decision, based on the Environmental Assessment and the lack of public comment, to approve the proposed action of doing aquatic herbicidal control of the aquatic invasive curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) within the Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area (CFWMA) starting in June 2016. If successful, the proposed action will work to control curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) within the west and east canals on the CFWMA at least in the immediate future. It is unlikely that control efforts will totally eradicate CLP from Canyon Ferry WMA as upstream populations would continue to provide plant propagules, but reductions in overall abundance will benefit water flow in the canals and native aquatic plant populations.

The analysis did not reveal any significant impacts to the human or physical environment as a result of the project. I therefore conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Sam B. Sheppard
Region 3 Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Date